

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5341
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
INFO AMCONSUL AMSTERDAM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, NL
SUBJECT: AMSTERDAM MAYOR AND COUNCIL IN POLITICAL IMBROGLIO

1. SUMMARY: THE IMPENDING DEMOLITION OF HOUSES FOR METRO CONSTRUCTION IN HOUSING-SHORT AMSTERDAM HAS INVOLVED THE CITY'S MAYOR, IVO SAMKALDEN, AND HIS LEFT-WING BOARD OF ALDERMEN IN A HOT POLITICAL DISPUTE. THE GROWING POLITICAL ROW IN THE CITY RECENTLY HEATED UP WHEN THE MAYOR PUBLICLY ACCUSED LEFT-WING GROUPS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR AN UNSUCCESSFUL BOMBING ATTEMPT AGAINST A METRO SITE. SAMKALDEN IS EXPECTED TO CARRY ON WITH BUILDING PLANS AND TO WEATHER THE STORM.
END SUMMARY.

2. LEFT WING ACTION GROUPS IN AMSTERDAM HAVE IN RECENT MONTHS INTENSIFIED THEIR EFFORTS TO BLOCK SCHEDULED DEMOLITION OF OCCUPIED HOUSING IN THE NIEUWMARKT AREA FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY'S SUBWAY SYSTEM. SEVERAL DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED AND SPRAY PAINTERS HAVE ADDED "STOP METRO" SLOGANS TO AMSTERDAM'S ALREADY SLOGAN-FILLED WALLS. DESPITE THE GROWING PRESSURES TO HALT DESTRUCTION OF HOUSES IN A CITY THAT IS CHRONICALLY SHORT OF SUITABLE RESIDENTIAL SPACE, MAYOR SAMKALDEN
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AND HIS LEFT-WING BOARD OF ALDERMEN HAVE PERSEVERED.

3. THE ARREST OF THREE MEN WHO ABANDONED AN EXPLOSIVES-FILLED SUITCASE NEAR ONE OF THE METRO CONSTRUCTION SITES ON FEB. 14, HAS INVOLVED SAMKALDEN IN A MINOR POLITICAL STORM. SHORTLY AFTER THE ARREST, SAMKALDEN, JOINED BY ALL BUT ONE OF THE ALDERMEN, ATTRIBUTED THE BOMBING ATTEMPT TO A LEFT-WING ACTION GROUP. WHEN IT TURNED OUT THAT A RIGHT-WING GROUP ATTEMPTING TO DISCREDIT THE LEFT WAS RESPONSIBLE, THE FURY OF AMSTERDAM'S VOCAL AND POWERFUL LEFT DESCENDED ON THE CITY'S LEADERSHIP, ALL OF WHOM ARE THEMSELVES VERY MUCH LEFT OF CENTER. SLANDER PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED AGAINST THE MAYOR, AND OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE CALLED FOR HIS RESIGNATION.

4. SAMKALDEN HAS STUCK TO HIS GUNS, AND HAS REFUSED TO OFFER A PUBLIC APOLOGY. A DECISION BY THE MAYOR TO PROCEED AS SCHEDULED WITH EVICTION OF RESIDENTS FROM CONDEMNED HOUSES ON MARCH 3 HAS PROMPTED ONE OF THE ALDERMEN, PACIFIST SOCIALIST HUIB REITHOF, TO RESIGN HIS POST.

5. KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES IN SAMKALDEN'S LABOR PARTY EXPECT HIM TO WEATHER THE STORM. ED VAN THIJN, LABOR PARTY FLOOR LEADER IN THE SECOND CHAMBER, HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT SAMKALDEN IS UNLIKELY TO APOLOGIZE AND WILL RIDE IT OUT. DESCRIBED AS A STRONG PERSONALITY AND A GOOD MAYOR, VAN THIJN SAID SAMKALDEN WAS ENTITLED TO ONE MISTAKE. PRIMIN'S POLITICAL ADVISOR, BEEREBOOM WENT EVEN FURTHER, SAYING THAT SAMKALDEN WAS CORRECT IN ACCUSING LEFT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR CREATING ATMOSPHERE LEADING TO VIOLENCE. BEEREBOOM SAID IT CLEAR THAT COMMUNIST PARTY HAD THOROUGHLY INFILTRATED METRO PROTEST GROUPS AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR CLIMATE WHICH RESULTED IN BOMBING ATTEMPT. HE THOUGHT THERE LITTLE CHANCE THAT SAMKALDEN WOULD RESIGN.

6. FOR USUN: IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF MISSION COULD BRIEF NYC COMMISSIONER DUKE ON THIS MATTER IN VIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN MAYORS BEAME AND SAMKALDEN AND POSSIBILITY OF THEIR EXCHANGING VISITS.
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